

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA INVENTORY ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Name of the Element: Ath-i: Knowledge related to Orthopedic practices

Brief Description: Ath-i is a traditional knowledge system of orthopedic practices developed many centuries back by the Kalasha people. During wartimes, the dead bodies of warriors were deboned and the bones were transported back home for traditional burial. The deboning practice gave birth to Ath-i and the knowledge of bones and muscles was transferred from generation to generation.

When a patient is brought for treatment of a broken bone, the Ath-i practitioner diagnoses by pressing the muscle and joints with his hands. After fixing the bone, a mixture of Machi (honey), Pomegranate skin, Desi Ghee (clarified butter) and rock salt, is applied and then four handmade sticks are tied around the affected area for support. No bandages are used in order to keep the blood circulation normal. After sixteen days, a mixture of pomegranate skin, Desi Ghee (clarified butter) and salt is applied on the affected area. After two weeks the sticks are untied and the patient is declared cured.

For joint pains, water retention in knees and arthritis, the patient is given a hot drink made with honey and herbs and then covered with woolen blankets. When the patient's feet are drenched with sweat, it is considered a sign of completion of detoxification process.

Ath-i is practiced by Kalasha people alone and there is no Muslim practitioner of this art, although the majority of the patients are Muslims from nearby villages.